

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-08

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9526

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 2188

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH BUDGET MINISTER ANDREOTTI

REF: ROME 1661

SUMMARY. IN LENGTHY CONVERSATION WITH BUDGET AND SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT MINISTER ANDREOTTI FEBRUARY 11, ANDREOTTI TOLD ME THAT THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING HAD GIVEN PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI A MANDATE TO TAKE VIGOROUS ACTION TO GIVE THE DC A CLEARER AND MORE POSITIVE IMAGE IN TIME FOR THE JUNE REGIONAL ELECTIONS. ANDREOTTI HOPED THAT, AS A RESULT, DC ELECTORAL LOSSES COULD BE CONTAINED TO 1 OR 2 PERCENT. ANDREOTTI EXPRESSED THE BELIEF THAT LEGISLATION NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 WOULD HURT THE DC IN THESE ELECTIONS, BUT FELT THAT IT WOULD NOT PASS PARLIAMENT IN TIME TO AFFECT THEM. ANDREOTTI SUPPORTED THE DC NATIONAL COUNCIL RENEWED STAND AGAINST THE PROSPECT OF A DC-COMMUNIST PARTY ACCORD. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE SOCIALIST PARTY, SINCE IT WANTS TO HOLD THE JUNE ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE, WILL NOT DELIBERATELY PROVOKE THE FALL OF THE MORO GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, SHOULD THE PSI GAIN SIGNIFICANTLY IN THESE ELECTIONS, ITS RESULTING INCREASED ASSERTIVENESS VIS-A-VIS THE DC COULD WELL PROVOKE A CRISIS. END SUMMARY.

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1. I MET WITH FORMER PRIME MINISTER AND PRESENT BUDGET

MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR SOUTHERN DEVELOPMENT ANDREOTTI FOR A 2 1/2 HOUR LUNCH ON FEBRUARY 11. DURING OUR CONVERSATION MINISTER ANDREOTTI MADE THE FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS CONCERNING THE ITALIAN POLITICAL SITUATION.

2. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING. ANDREOTTI SAID THAT THE VOTE AT THE RECENT COUNCIL MEETING (IN WHICH A FOUR-FIFTHS MAJORITY SUPPORTED PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI) HAD GIVEN FANFANI A MANDATE TO TAKE VIGOROUS ACTION AND GIVE THE DC A CLEARER MORE POSITIVE IMAGE PRIOR TO THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS. ANDREOTTI SAID THAT TIME IS SHORT AND THERE IS A GREAT DEAL OF ORGANIZATIONAL WORK TO BE DONE. HOWEVER, HE HOPED THAT THESE EFFORTS IN WHICH HE PLANS TO PARTICIPATE ACTIVELY MAY CONTAIN DC LOSSES AND HOLD THEM TO MINOR PROPORTIONS - PERHAPS TO A LOSS OF ONLY 1 OR 2 PERCENT.

3. VOTE FOR THE 18 YEAR OLDS. ANDREOTTI EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT THE NEGATIVE EFFECTS FOR THE DC OF LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18. (THIS MEASURE IS NOW BEING DEBATED IN PARLIAMENT.) HOWEVER, HE FEELS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT LEGISLATION IN THIS SENSE CAN BE PASSED IN TIME FOR THE REGIONAL ELECTIONS. THESE ELECTIONS, HE SAID, WILL BE HELD IN EARLY JUNE.

4. DC-SOCIALIST PARTY RELATIONS. ANDREOTTI FEELS THAT THE PSI WILL CONTINUE TO CAUSE TROUBLE. THE PSI, HE SAID, CAUSES AS MUCH OR MORE DIFFICULTIES WHEN IT IS SUPPORTING THE GOVERNMENT FROM THE OUTSIDE AS WHEN IT IS IN THE COALITION. HOWEVER, HE SAID THAT HE DOES NOT BELIEVE THE PSI WISHES TO PROVOKE A GOVERNMENT CRISIS PRIOR TO THE JUNE REGIONAL ELECTIONS. HE THUS SEES NO THREAT TO THE MORO GOVERNMENT AT THE PRESENT TIME. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE PSI MAKES SUBSTANTIAL GAINS IN THE REGIONALS, ANDREOTTI PREDICTS THAT THEY MAY DIG IN THEIR HEELS AND ASK FOR POSITIONS THE DC WOULD NOT BE PREPARED TO GIVE THEM. THIS WOULD BRING ABOUT A CRISIS, HE SAID.

5. "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" ISSUE. ANDREOTTI SAID THAT HE APPROVED THE REITERATED NATIONAL COUNCIL REJECTION OF THE IDEA OF A DC-COMMUNIST PARTY ACCORD OR "HISTORIC COMPROMISE."
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HE DOUBTED THAT FANFANI AND THE REST OF THE DC LEADERSHIP WOULD PERMIT FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS ALONG THE LINES OF THE LOCAL DC-PCI ACCORDS IN VENICE AND AVELLINO (ROME 17846, NAPLES 086). IN ADDITION, HE THOUGHT THAT EXISTING ACCORDS MIGHT POSSIBLY BE REVERSED, ALTHOUGH HE WAS MORE DUBIOUS IN THE CASE OF VENICE THAN OF AVELLINO. (COMMENT: FEBRUARY 13 PRESS ANNOUNCED THAT VENICE DC ALDERMEN HAVE JUST RESIGNED FROM THE CITY GOVERNMENT. ALTHOUGH DC MAYOR

REMAINS IN OFFICE FOR "ORDINARY ADMINISTRATION," DC MOVE
MAY MARK BEGINNING OF ROLLBACK OF VENICE "MINI-COMPROMISE.")

6. I TOLD ANDREOTTI THAT IN TALKS WITH SEVERAL BISHOPS IN
MY RECENT TRAVELS IN THE CAMPANIA REGION (NAPLES), I HAD
HEARD CONCERN EXPRESSED FOR THE OUTCOME OF THE JUNE ELECTIONS.
I ASKED ANDREOTTI WHETHER HE SSES ANY CHANCE OF REINVIGORATING
THE DC YOUTH MOVEMENT AS ONE WAY OF HELPING THE DC PARTY.
INCREASE ITS POPULAR SUPPORT. ANDREOTTI RESPONDED THAT ACTION
FROM THE TOP LEADERSHIP WOULD BE NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH
ANYTHING IN THIS RESPECT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ROME 2188

LIMDIS

7. COMMENT: ANDREOTTI HAS APPEARED TO DISTANCE HIMSELF FROM DC
PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI IN RECENT MONTHS AND THEIR POLITICAL
RELATIONS SEEM DISTINCTLY COOL. HOWEVER, ANDREOTTI'S FACTION
DID VOTE TO APPROVE FANFANI'S POLICY PRESENTATION AT THE
RECENT NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETING AND ANDREOTTI OBVIOUSLY CAN
BE EXPECTED TO PITCH IN TO SUPPORT THE DC REGIONAL ELECTION
CAMPAIGN. ANDREOTTI'S ASSESSMENT OF THE POSSIBILITIES FOR
CONTAINING DC LOSSES TO 1 OR 2 PERCENT MAY APPEAR A BIT
OPTIMISTIC AT THIS JUNCTURE, BUT OTHER HIGHLY QUALIFIED
OBSERVERS DO TEND TO DISCOUNT THE POSSIBILITY OF A DC
ELECTORAL ROUT. I BELIEVE ANDREOTTI'S MOST SIGNIFICANT
AND PROBABLY VALID, FORECASTS CONCERN SOCIALIST ATTITUDES.
THE PSI CLEARLY SETS GREAT STORE ON HOLDING THE JUNE
REGIONAL ELECTIONS ON SCHEDULE AND THEREFORE IS NOT LIKELY
TO PROVOKE DELIBERATELY A GOVERNMENT CRISIS BEFORE THAT

DATE. HOWEVER, ANDREOTTI IS PROBABLY RIGHT THAT ANY
SIGNIFICANT PSI GAINS IN THESE ELECTIONS WILL RESULT IN
INTENSIFIED PSI PRESSURE ON THE DC FOR MORE POWER AND
PATRONAGE AND THIS WOULD CERTAINLY LEAD TO HEAVY POLITICAL
WEATHER FOR THE DC PARTY AND FOR THE MORO GOVERNMENT. VOLPE

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